A QUEST WITH A DIFFERENCE

Culture Quest

INDIA

Department of Education
Government of NCT of Delhi

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A QUEST WITH A DIFFERENCE

सत्यमेव जयते

Culture Quest INDIA

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A QUEST WITH A DIFFERENCE

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GOVT. OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI
DELHI SECRETARIAT, I.P. ESTATE, NEW DELHI-110002

SHEILA DIKSHIT
CHIEF MINISTER

D.O. NO.: OSD CM 1/29
Dated: 13/1/06

MESSAGE

My heartiest congratulations on the formal launch of CultureQuest India. It is a day I have looked forward to, and I have watched with growing pride the fledging pilot initiative take shape. It has now reached a stage where it will reach all our schools, and not just government schools, but students and teachers across India. It will build bridges of friendship not just with one country but with students and teachers across the world. It will equip our youth with knowledge on the entire world of computers which is so essential in today's world.

I am confident that CultureQuest is an endeavour that shall help to build a spirit of global oneness, of shared hopes and understandings.

I am so happy that CultureQuest India has been so enthusiastically received by the students and teachers and I wish them well.

Sheila Dikshit

(SHEILA DIKSHIT)

शिक्षा, पर्यटन, कला, संस्कृति एवं भाषा, गुरुद्वारा चुनाव
एवं गुरुद्वारा प्रशासन विभाग मंत्री
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दिनांक 13.1.06
Date

अरविन्दर सिंह लवली
सत्यमेव जयते ARVINDER SINGH LOVELY

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure that Culture Quest India is being formally launched in the schools of Govt. of Delhi. Culture Quest India provides both students and teachers with the opportunity to explore other cultures using primarily the tools of modern day technology. It is an excellent means of breathing life into all aspects of culture be it history or music, and is therefore an exciting and enthralling experience. There is no doubt that CultureQuest India will really ignite our young minds and through them, create a better world.

I send my warmest greetings to all the students and teachers, to the Department of Education and to SCERT. I hope that all of you will establish a world wide chain of class-room relationships, linking students and teachers across the globe.

(ARVINDER SINGH LOVELY)

S. REGUNATHAN

मुख्य सचिव
राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र दिल्ली सरकार
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F.3/30/CS/06/
January 13, 2006

MESSAGE

I am very happy to learn of the launch of CultureQuest India, a collaborative programme of the Department of Education, Government of Delhi and City College of the City University of New York, in schools of Delhi wherein students and teachers will learn about daily life, customs and traditions of other countries. This initiative will prepare students to explore new horizons, and achieve higher levels of academic excellence through shared experiences.

I am hopeful that CultureQuest India will create an environment which will help, motivate, inspire and build a vision amongst the young students towards promotion of mutual understanding, intercultural and intra-cultural awareness by exploring cultures of different countries of the world.

I wish you every success in your venture.

(S. REGUNATHAN)

Rina Ray
IAS

सत्यमेव जयते

सचिव (शिक्षा)
राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र
दिल्ली सरकार
पुराना सचिवालय, दिल्ली-११० ०५४
दूरभाष: २३८९०११९ टैलीफैक्स: २३८९०१८७

Secretary (Education)
Government of National Capital
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FOREWORD

Culture and education have always played a crucial role in prompting communities and societies to explore new horizons and achieve higher levels of progress and harmony. Throughout history, cultural ambassadors have played a pivotal role in increasing people's knowledge and understanding of other peoples, thus helping in the creation of feelings of brotherhood and friendship, rather than antagonism and hostility. It was with such a vision in mind that the Centre for School Development, City College of the City University of New York, and the Department of Education, Government of Delhi, embarked on a unique journey called CultureQuest. This fascinating project has successfully completed its prototype in all the Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas (RPVVS) of this Department and is now being formally launched in all our schools.

CultureQuest has not only taught our students and teachers all the facets of the fascinating world of computers and I.T., but has also taken them on unchartered territories of actual two way communication with their peers in other countries. What better way could there be to learn about other cultures than to actually see a person in another country, and to hear his/her voice with its unique accent, to be able to ask questions and in turn explain your own traditions and customs. During the prototype, the RPVVS were in touch primarily with schools in the U.S.A., but future plans include expanding CultureQuest to other countries including Russia, China and Pakistan. In fact, we also hope to reach out to students and teachers in all parts of India also. We genuinely believe that if the youth of the world and their teachers share experiences on a one to one basis, laugh and communicate together, then we can truly hope for a happier, better world.

Dr M C Mathur
Director

State Council of Educational Research&Training,
Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024
Dated the January 13,2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a matter of immense pride and pleasure that CultureQuest India is being launched as a collaborative project of Department of Education,GNCT of Delhi and City College of the City University of New York to facilitate students and teachers of Government schools of Delhi and their counterparts in other parts of the world through a synthesis of information technology, culture and education. It will undoubtedly have a very fruitful impact on all levels of education. It will indeed open new vistas for students and teachers to learn about various cultures in a collaborative learning process among peers.

I extend my sincere thanks to the students, teachers and principals of Directorate of Education for their remarkable contribution and participation during the pilot study which lay the foundation of the project.

I extend my gratitude to the officers of the Directorate of Education, GNCT of Delhi to Mr. Vijay Kumar, Director, and Ms Gitanjali Kundra, Additional Director of Education for providing administrative, academic and technical guidance and Ms Neelam Verma ,Assistant Director of Education for building coordination amongst the various departments for smooth implementation of the project. I acknowledge my thanks to Mr. Ashok Kumar, PM (IT) for his technical support to the project team.

I convey my thanks to the SCERT team comprising Dr I S Suri, Sr Lecturer (Project Coordinator), Mr. V.K. Sodhi, Reader and Mr Naresh Kapoor, Sr. Lecturer (Technical Group), Mr. Mukesh Yadav, Publications Officer and Dr. Sunil Kumar, Sr. Lecturer for effectively planning, coordinating, and implementing the pilot project.

I acknowledge my special thanks to Dr. Norman Shapiro, Dr. Sheila Offman Gersh and Dr. Ravi Kalia of the Centre for School Development, City College of the City University of New York, and to the students and teachers of New York for this excellent partnership.

A QUEST WITH A DIFFERENCE - CULTUREQUEST

INTRODUCTION

History tells us about how the thirst for learning and the spirit of adventure drove people from their homes to distant lands, across seas and mountains. These pioneers underwent tremendous hardship and risked everything in their quest for knowledge. Their achievements have benefited the human race as a whole and have helped knit the world into one global village.

Today, technology has made the global village a reality. However, human consciousness has unfortunately not kept pace with technical progress. In fact we seem to be shrinking further into our own "narrow domestic walls" of nation, community, family and the individual.

Today the IT Revolution, through the Internet, has placed the world on our desktops. We need only to rekindle the spirit of enquiry and the thirst for knowledge to utilize all the avenues open to us to explore our world. Our interactions with people from all over the globe will help foster the spirit of universal fellowship amongst all people. It will inculcate in us a sensitivity to other cultures, born from a knowledge of the many different ways in which people say, think, and act out the same things all we humans do.

And all it takes is the click of a mouse...

CultureQuest is an idea that has come of age — people getting in touch with people on their own, just like neighbours talking over the fence, but separated by continents and oceans. CultureQuest is a small step towards creating the global village, and with a deeper understanding among peoples about each other.

CultureQuest India is a unique initiative that attempts to link students studying in government run schools of Delhi with student communities in other parts of the world. It opens up new avenues for students and teachers to learn about various cultures in a collaborative learning process among peers living in different parts of the globe through the use of Internet as a link to facilitate human communication. This project is an attempt to bring students of different countries in close contact with the help of modern technology.

We, the members of the Support Group, CultureQuest India invite all the students and teachers of the Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi to join hands so that better understanding & peace may prevail in the world:

Ms. Chanderkanta Chabria
Ms. Rajyasri Narayan
Mr. Bharat Thakur
Ms. Girija Shanker
Ms. Nirupma Abhyankar
Ms. Amita Taneja
Ms. Kamayani Joshi
Ms. Renu Kashyap
Ms. Rashmi Singh
Ms. Animika Srivastava
Ms. Kusum Nagpal
Mr. Devender Kumar
Ms. Anju Mehta
Dr. Hemant Tahiliani
Ms. Snehlata Gupta
Ms. Preeti Sharma
Ms. Chandraboli Ghorai
Ms. Aruna Beri
Ms. Manshi Verma
Mr. Sayyed Ahmed
Ms. Daisy Kalia
Ms. Naveena Bedi
Ms. Narender Kaur

Members of the Support Group, CultureQuest India

A QUEST WITH A DIFFERENCE - CULTUREQUEST

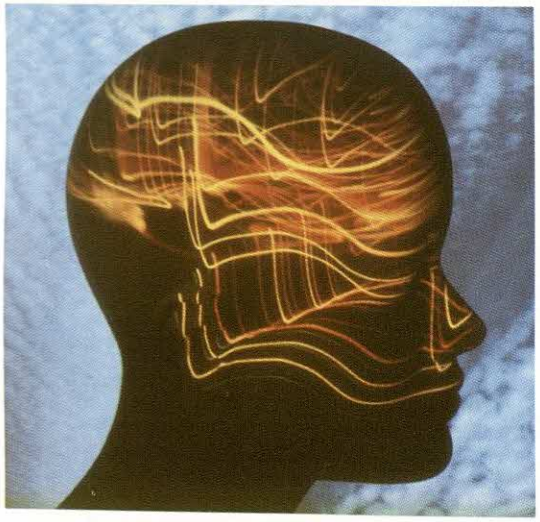
CultureQuest is a means to learn about different cultures and an attempt to set up collaborative learning between peers, who though separated by vast distances are brought into close contact by modern technology.

CultureQuest involves students and teachers engaged in inquiry based classroom projects that explore other peoples and cultures. Projects are rooted in students' questions and interests and involve the focussed, intensive study of one or more aspects of other cultures-art, music, history, religion, language, customs, traditions, and so on.

CultureQuest is undertaken by an entire class working together, within which small groups of students focus on particular areas of the culture that are of interest to them.

CultureQuest seeks to promote better understanding and appreciation of other cultures, and their own, through inquiry, research and literacy skills, and provide students with technology skills for the 21st century.

The Beginning of a Dream....



CultureQuest was created at the Center for School Development at the City College of New York, USA with the objective of collaboratively creating a worldwide network of independent CultureQuest programmes led by educators who would develop and expand CultureQuest in each partner nation.

It was initially supported through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional support was received from JP MorganChase, the USDOE's PT3 Program, the New York State Education Department, and the America India Foundation.

CULTUREQUEST CAN BE DONE BY

- An entire class working together
- Small groups of students

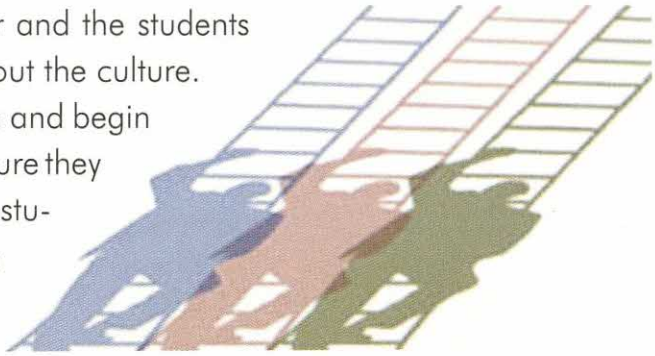
Some aspects of culture that may be explored in a CultureQuest Project are:

Literature	Religion	Traditions	Beliefs
Art	Language	History	Values
Music	Daily life	Customs	Behaviour

Steps in the CultureQuest Process

- **Identifying the Culture to be studied** - A decision is taken on which culture to study based on an assessment of student interests and available resources both in the local community and on the Internet.

- **Introducing the Concepts** - The teacher and the students brainstorm on what they want to know about the culture. Students form small groups by interest area and begin the process of identifying those areas of culture they will study. The teacher then introduces the students to CultureQuest and explains what a CultureQuest method is and what the group will be doing. The teacher and the students identify the common or core information they will gather on the culture to be studied and this information is presented as part of their final project.



- **Doing the Research** - Students and teachers develop a preliminary list of resources for their study. These include: books, Internet websites, students and teachers in the country being studied, experts, resources in the community, and so on.

- **The Students and their Teachers Learn Needed Technology Skills** - These include : research on the Internet: searching, evaluating sites, citations, ethical use, communicating with the Internet: e-mail, ePals, accessing "cultural informants", using discussion boards and chats, Video conferencing, publishing on the Internet: web site creation and use of web editor software, graphics & animation (where appropriate), photography and video (where appropriate)

- **Completion of Projects** - The teacher and students design the class website where they post their projects

CultureQuest Pedagogy

Student-Centered	Constructivist	Project-Based	Authentic
Ownership	Interdisciplinary	Inquiry-Based	Collaborative
Teacher as Expert Learner	Multicultural	Standards-Based	Real Audiences for Work
Multiple Intelligence	Humanistic and Caring	Student as Worker	Product/Action

Together we Progress...

How does CultureQuest help Students?

STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATE IN CULTUREQUEST PROJECTS ACQUIRE THE FOLLOWING SKILLS	
Academic	Improved Reading, Writing, Increased knowledge of Music, Art & Literature, History, Geography, and Self-confidence
Technology	Internet Use, Computer Skills, Web Site Design, Presentation and Graphics
Learning Skills	Problem Solving, Research Skills, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication, Inter-personal skills
Culture	Appreciation of other Cultures, Appreciation of Multiculturalism, Knowledge of other Cultures, Knowledge of own Culture

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

How does CultureQuest help Teachers?

TECHNOLOGY

Teachers learn and/or review specific technology skills that will strengthen and enhance classroom instruction. These skills include:

- Searching the Internet, evaluating Internet web sites, using proper citations and developing appropriate and ethical use policies
- Teaching with the Internet
- Creating and designing websites to "publish" students' work
- Assisting students in using multimedia to support CultureQuest projects.
- Assisting students develop skills for public presentations, and research

CULTURE

Teachers learn and/or review the general concept of culture and cross-cultural understanding. They also learn how to:

- Explore diverse aspects of a variety of specific cultures in other countries or within their own country.
- Understand the characteristics and practices that comprise a culture and what strengthens cross-cultural tolerance and appreciation of differences.
- Identify dimensions of difference and similarity across cultures.
- Avoid their own biases, preconceptions and myths.

PEDAGOGY

Teachers learn and/or review the strategies for guiding students in their CultureQuest investigations. This includes how to:

- Help students develop their investigations through students' own interest and questions about other cultures.
- Assume the role of coach, guiding partner and expert learner while students plan and carry out the work of the projects.
- Teach with an inquiry-based approach.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR....

CULTUREQUEST IN INDIA

The CultureQuest Project links student communities in India and the United States, opens up new avenues for learning about the two societies and builds closer links between the two countries using the computer as a link to facilitate human communication.

CultureQuest was born in the City College of New York in 1988. However, it reached India only in 2002-03. The Indian chapter began four years ago, when Prof. Ravi Kalia, of the City College of New York, a former student of Ludlow Castle Government School, visited India and spoke about the initiative. The Education Department, Government of Delhi showed keen interest and made CultureQuest possible, and today all Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas in Delhi are a part of CultureQuest. It is run in the USA with the help of the National Endowment for Humanities, the City College of New York and the New York Education Department. The Indian-American Foundation also contributed when CultureQuest came to India.

Why is CultureQuest so important ? It is a cause of concern that students all over the world know very little about different cultures and societies. Their knowledge may be enough to clear an examination but it is not sufficient to foster understanding and feelings of brotherhood. Culture needs to be investigated, understood and experienced. The impact of hearing a fellow student from another country speak is many times more effective than any other method of communication. To open up, a student must realize that diversity is a strength, not a weakness.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR TEACHERS OF RPVVS

CultureQuest began in India with different workshops for teachers that lasted for nine months.

WORKSHOP ON COMPUTER-AIDED LEARNING (CAL)

The teachers learning the technological skills at CAL workshop

In the pilot phase, ten Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalayas Directorate of Education, Government of NCT of Delhi were identified for participation in the project. Sixteen teachers from these schools were trained in computer-aided learning (CAL) from September 16 to October 10, 2002.

A very strong foundation was laid on visualization, non-linear, interactive frames, multimedia format, including self-created animations and audio. Participants also developed web pages and a newsletter on relevant themes in order to develop a comprehensive learning package to provide indepth understanding and enrichment on relevant topics.

WORKSHOP ON CULTURE

A four-day training on Indian and American cultures was organized from November 25- 28, 2002 at SCERT for the first batch of teachers of RPVVs. Eminent experts from Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi University, Janaki Devi College and SCERT deliberated on the subject and shared their experiences of American culture, its components, and educational system.

WORKSHOP ON CULTUREQUEST

A five-day training workshop on CultureQuest was organized from January 20-24, 2003 at SCERT for the teachers of RPVVs. It was conducted by the Teacher Educators, Dr. Sheila Offman Gersh and Ms.Rhoda Peltzer, Divisional Directors, Center for School Development from the City College of the City University of New York (CCCUNY), to orient the teachers on CultureQuest. The Pilot Project was inaugurated at RPVV, Surajmal Vihar on January 20, 2003. The main purpose of the programme at Surajmal Vihar was for the Teacher Educators from City College of New York to learn about the school system in Delhi, to meet the participating teachers, to get acquainted with the technology that exists in schools and to introduce all the teachers of participating schools and students of the host school - RPVV, Surajmal Vihar - to CultureQuest. Dr. Sheila Gersh and Ms.Rhoda Peltzer explained the concept of CultureQuest. They shared the work done with Japan under CultureQuest. The highlights of the projects prepared by the teachers of RPVVs in the CAL Programme under CultureQuest, organized from 16th September to 10th October 2002, were shared. The Teacher Educators from City College of New York interacted with the students on American culture, and, the internet as a resource for learning. Various useful web sites were shared with students and teachers.

From January 21-23, 2003 a workshop of teachers was held at SCERT. The highlights of the workshop were: modelling the process and planning the CultureQuest projects, Internet basics, creating a graphical map using Inspiration software, evaluation of the project, creation of CultureQuest web sites incorporating interactive items such as quizzes, discussion forum, etc. The main elements of culture were discussed with the participants. The techniques of searching the web to get useful material for the projects were shared with the teachers. The participants were apprised with the technique to graphically map their ideas and create their own web sites. At the

end of the workshop the participants presented their projects - web sites created by them on different aspects of American culture. The teachers created the following web pages:

- American Architecture.
- Geographical and Economic Aspects of America.
- Children At Play - Sports and Games in American Society.
- Public Schools of America.

Sheila Gersh with the students of RPVV, Surajmal Vihar

These projects have been put up on - www.culturequest.us - the web site of the CultureQuest Project, City College of New York.

The Workshop concluded on January 24, 2003 with a valedictory function at India International Centre. Dr. Sheila Gersh and Mrs. Rhoda Peltzer gave a presentation on CultureQuest before guests from MHRD, Directorate of Education, bilateral agencies, Principals of DIETs of Delhi and SCERT. The groups of teachers also presented their work on Web pages. There was also a question-answer session between the participants and the Teacher Educators.

A similar exercise was held with teachers of state run schools in New York.

CULTUREQUEST AT SCHOOLS

CultureQuest was initiated in all the RPVVs in the beginning of 2003-04. The students were enthusiastic and eagerly participated in the project. Brainstorming sessions were conducted with them regarding the culture of America. The various aspects of culture like art, literature, history, language, daily life, customs and tradition etc. were listed and students with the common interest in a topic formed groups.

Teacher Educators from CCCUNY with teachers in India

They were trained to work on various software like MS Word and MS PowerPoint to help them to make their projects. They were taught how to access the Internet to search for information, and how to make email IDs.

The participant teachers of RPVVs were regularly in touch with Dr. Sheila Gersh for guidance. Through her, the teachers of the RPVVs contacted the teachers of state run schools in New York who were participating in a similar exercise in their schools. Email IDs of the students were exchanged and email partners between the students of both the countries made. Students and teachers started interacting through emails and raising interesting questions on various aspects of culture.

Some Interesting Interactions

*...Because I am a hungry kid, I want to know that what kind of food you eat in India?

Stanylyn Diaz

*...Is it true that India is so over populated that it may beat China in next 5-10 years?

Luke Todd

*...What is up with you or as we would say SUP, Dude?! It is the alternative language in my homeland. We call it SLANG. Do you have any """SLANG"""??!!

Katherine

*...We do not have festivals; we have fairs, where there are rides and food. We have a ride called the AIR GLORY; it is high in the sky, about 30 feet high. It is fun to go!!

Katie Harwig

*...We have three main festivals but we don't call them festivals we call them holidays, they are Christmas, Halloween, and Thanksgiving.

Cole Brewer

*...My favorite festival is Christmas because we get presents.

Nicole

*...We have a festival slightly similar to Halloween, which is called 'Lohri', we go around the neighbourhood and get money or sweets. It is like trick-or-treat of the Halloween.

Neha

*...These days we are greatly influenced by Western culture. Do you ever feel impressed by Indian culture?

Puneet

*...Are Beggars there in America? How do they go for begging?

Yogesh

THE NEXT STEP...

PowerPoint Presentations

The entire group of students from all the RPVVs collected the information regarding their projects from their email partners and also from various Internet sites. These were developed into PowerPoint presentations on topics that they had selected as their project. In all about 60 projects have been made by the students and the teachers of different RPVVs during the pilot phase. The projects were made in three categories:

- Presentations made by students and teachers
- Presentations made by students
- Presentations made by teachers

School	Presentations made by Students and Teachers	Presentations made by Students	Presentations made by Teachers
RPVV, Tyagraj Nagar, Lodhi Road	◆ Halloween day ◆ Thanksgiving day ◆ Charlie Chaplin 	◆ Disney Land ◆ Washington DC ◆ Arlington Cemetery ◆ Dances of America ◆ American Football	◆ Muslim Marriage in India

School	Presentations made by Students and Teachers	Presentations made by Students	Presentations made by Teachers
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar	◆ Mississippi ◆ Native Americans ◆ Martin Luther King ◆ Children's literature ◆ Rural America ◆ Apollo Missions ◆ Super Heroes ◆ Cartoon Characters ◆ American Monuments	◆ American Food ◆ Wild Life ◆ My Neighbourhood - San Jose ◆ Summer Vacations	◆ Exploring Mars ◆ Grand Canyon
RPVV, Link Road	◆ USA Media ◆ USA Culture	◆ USA Government	◆ Space Exploration by USA
RPVV, Vasant Kunj	◆ Statue of Liberty	◆ Comic Heroes	◆ American Icons
RPVV, Gandhi Nagar	◆ Thomas Jefferson ◆ USA in Space		◆ Native Americans ◆ Blacks in America

School	Presentations made by Students and Teachers	Presentations made by Students	Presentations made by Teachers
RPVV, Kishan Ganj	◆ Home Schooling ◆ Crimes ◆ Recreational Activities	◆ Walt Disney ◆ Examination System in America	
RPVV, Shalimar Bagh	◆ American Tourist Attractions		◆ Alabama(State)
RPVV, Yamuna Vihar	◆ Education in American Schools ◆ Modernization to Globalization in America	◆ Festivals of America ◆ Rare Bird Species of America	
	◆ Judiciary System in America ◆ Government of America ◆ Citizenship of America ◆ Beggars of America ◆ Saddam Hussain and America		
RPVV, Nand Nagari	◆ The Gun Culture		
RPVV, Paschim Vihar	◆ States of America ◆ American Wedding - Customs and Superstitions		

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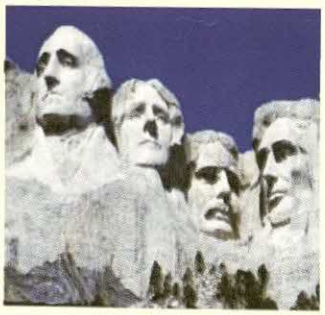
School	Presentations made by Students and Teachers	Presentations made by Students	Presentations made by Teachers
RPVV, Rohini	◆ Walt-Disney	◆ Washington DC ◆ US Aviation ◆ Base Ball	◆ New-York ◆ Mississippi
RPVV, Hari Nagar		◆ American Plants ◆ American Wildlife	◆ American Music - Jazz ◆ American Cities
RPVV, Dwarka	◆ Wedding Ceremony in US ◆ Disneyland ◆ Festival Quest	◆ Journey of Columbus	
RPVV, Lajpat Nagar	◆ The Formidable Pair - Venus and Serena Williams	◆ Prairies ◆ Mount Rushmore 	

POSTING OF THE PROJECTS MADE BY THE TEACHERS AND THE STUDENTS ON THE INTERNET

Some of the projects developed by the teachers of RPVVs under the Project and the projects prepared by the teachers of state run schools of New York have been posted on the Internet. They can be accessed at the web site: www.culturequest.us. Another web site on CultureQuest in India has also been developed and most of the projects prepared by students and the teachers of RPVVs are posted on this site. Its address is www.edudel.nic.in/cqi

VISIT OF PROF RAVI KALIA

Prof. Ravi Kalia of the City College of New York visited New Delhi in August 2003 to orient the principals, teachers and students of RPVVs. The projects made by students of RPVVs were reviewed. He highly appreciated the work done by the teachers as well as the students.

IMPETUS

In the last week of January 2004, Dr. Janaki Rajan, Director SCERT, presented the report on "CultureQuest projects in India" to Mrs. Sheila Dixit, Chief Minister of Delhi. Principal Secretary to the CM, Mr. Regunathan, Education Secretary, Mrs. Geeta Sagar, Director of Education, Mr. Rajender Singh and Professor Ravi Kalia of the Center for School Development, City College of New York were also present. Mrs. Sheila Dixit appreciated the endeavour and encouraged the team to carry on the project with much more zeal so that the children of all government schools could benefit.

CULTUREQUEST INDIA: HAPPENINGS

Here we feature interesting events that were triggered off in RPVVs because of CultureQuest.

RAJKIYA PRATIBHA VIKAS VIDYALAYA, SURAJMAL VIHAR, NEW DELHI - 110092

24 July, 2004

All good people of a country are always curious to gain and share knowledge with other countries, and this is what CULTURE QUEST is all about. Students belonging to various levels are also a part of this quest. On 24th July, 2004 we interacted with Mr. Andrew Nash who is an American and presently pursuing higher education from JNU Delhi. He was invited to our school to answer queries raised by our school students related to their different projects on the USA. After a traditional welcome given to Mr. Nash the students asked him many questions on America's religion, business, food, social life, student's life and NASA.

Some students raised some fresh topics like Iraq-War, 9/11 attacks and President's Election. Mr. Nash very beautifully satisfied the curiosities of the students. He was very delighted to see such a huge curiosity among Indian students to know about the US. He gave us e-mail IDs of his mother and cousin for more information from America. The interaction lasted for more than two hours. Finally, Mrs. Chamoli (Principal), Mrs. Marya (Vice Principal), Mrs. Snehlata, Mr. B.C. Thakur, and Mrs. Shankar, thanked Mr. Nash. It was a nice day to remember.

Anurag, XI B

RAJKIYA PRATIBHA VIKAS VIDYALAYA, DWARKA NEW DELHI

Our school joined CultureQuest in 2004.

Our students interacted with students from the US through emails and got a lot of information about American festivals. The best part was that the American students sent their own photographs celebrating these festivals.

We invited Ms. Courtney A. Kramer (Third Secretary, Embassy of the United States of America) and Mr. Scott from USA to interact with our students and give them first hand

Ms. Kramer interacting with the students at RPVV, Dwarka

information and answer the queries of students. The students asked about various festivals celebrated in US. Ms. Kramer distributed cookies of different shapes, to the students.

She also taught the students how to make a carving out of pumpkins as is done in the popular festival of US -'Halloween Day'.

Naveena Bedi
Kusum Nagpal

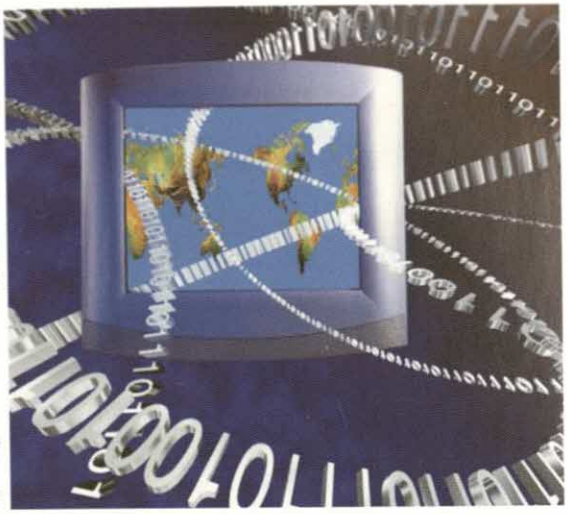
It was an interesting experience to interact with Ms. Courtney A Kramer and ask her different questions based on festival celebrations and we are thankful to her for the same. We learnt a lot from Mr. Scott about celebrations of festivals in U.S.A and about their rich cultural heritage. They were telling us about Good Friday. I asked them- Are you off on Good Friday? He said "NO". But we have holiday on Good Friday. They told us about their festival HALLOWEEN and we even carved the pumpkin. It was a nice experience to see a candle being lighted in the carved pumpkin. We even hunted Easter eggs.

The students with the carved Pumpkin - "Jack of Lantern"

We worked on the project FESTIVAL QUEST...We learned a lot about American festivals (holidays) and, how they celebrate them. We also gathered information from emails, Encarta, books, and interaction with American students

Aditya
Prakirti Thakur

CULTUREQUEST INDIA WEBSITE



CultureQuest India is an initiative of the students and teachers of the schools under the Directorate of Education, Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi. CultureQuest India aims to foster an understanding and appreciation among school students of different cultures within India and the world. It encourages students to set up channels of communication with students in schools across India and other countries to learn about each other's cultures.

The website of CultureQuest India is a portal that enables students and teachers from the schools of the Directorate of Education, Government of Delhi to reach out to educational fraternities and cultural communities within India and the rest of the world.

The website provides an interactive platform for students in classrooms across Delhi, India and the world. It creates an opportunity for students to pose their myriad questions, discuss aspects of their culture and display the product of their learning in a safe, shared space.

The website welcomes schools to register themselves as members and become a part of the larger global family interested in learning about, understanding and appreciating each others cultures.

Some of the features of the website:

Discussion Forum: Members have specific areas and topics of interest that they wish to explore. The discussion forum provides the site to enable members to post their queries and responses and explore their diverse interests.

Resources: While CultureQuest India relies on technology to a great extent to fulfill its objectives, it has to be kept in mind that it is not solely a technological innovation. The project focus on learning and technology is only an aid to help foster that learning. The resources being provided on the website have been created keeping this fact in mind.

Hence there are two kinds of resources being provided. The first is a kind of detailed tutorial to help new entrants learn what CultureQuest India is all about and how to go about doing a CultureQuest project.

The second set of resources is more technical in nature and provides information about or actual downloads of free software that is available on the Internet to help create programmes or access and transmit information available in multimedia format. Some examples of such software are real player, quick time, skype, acrobat reader, etc.

Sample Projects: Sample projects, as the name suggests, is a space created for students and teachers from member schools to display the product of their learning, either as a completed and finished project or as "works in progress".

School Profile: The best way to learn about a culture is from the people who belong to that culture and live it day in and day out. School Profile provides a way to learn about member schools within CultureQuest India. It also provides information about students and teachers within member schools, their special areas of interest and means of getting in touch with them.

News From Schools: One of the most exciting parts of CultureQuest has been the opportunity to learn about the culture of a country from primary sources, such as by talking with people from those countries, tasting their food or listening to their music, etc. Some schools were able to invite visitors to their school to talk about their cultures. We hope in the future more events such as food tasting sessions, cooking sessions, music and dance recitals can be conducted to enable a first hand experience of diverse cultures, by students. News from Schools provides a site for schools and members to post an account of any such event organised at or by a school.

Photo Gallery: This, as the title suggests, carries photographs of events such as training programmes, video conferencing, launches, visits by cultural ambassadors, etc. organised in relation to CultureQuest India, by member schools, the Directorate of Education and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT).

STUDENTS SPEAK...

CultureQuest is a programme for the students of India and America to communicate with each other. Through CultureQuest I found my friend who lives in America. Kevin is my best friend. Our friendship is very strong. I am very thankful to the project. It has helped me to learn about computers and also find a good friend from the other side of the world.

Sandeep Dhondiyal, VIIIA
RPVV, Tyagraj Nagar

Hi! I am Ashish Yadav. I am a part of the CultureQuest team of our school. I have a partner called Dan. He is a student of an American school. I contacted him through the Internet, and we exchanged a lot of information by mailing each other through our E-Mail ID's. Through this project I could collect information about American culture, especially about American monuments and in return I sent him information about some of the most beautiful Indian monuments. Dan sent me a lot of details about Disney land. That made me explore the topic and that was how I made the presentation on Disneyland. I was very happy working on that project. It was great fun and I will never forget those hours I spent making the presentation.

Ashish Yadav, VIIIA
RPVV, Tyagraj Nagar

I worked on a project named NEWYORK, an established city of trade in the world. During the project, I came to know about the life styles and relationship among different families. Food habits, education and culture in New York were also the other areas of my explorations where I improved my knowledge. It is good to participate in these cultural exchange programmes and I enjoyed it a lot.

Vaibhav, IXB
RPVV, Sector- XI, Rohini

I worked on the project "Mars Exploration" as I am interested in Space Exploration. One thing I learnt in the project was about the new endeavours being made in space and expeditions being sent to Mars. I learnt many facts about Mars and was most excited to learn about Martian Fields.

In the future I want to learn about Indian Cultures. I want to learn more about the Harappan phase and talk to archaeologists.

Sohard, XA
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar.

I worked on Mars Exploration. It was exciting to work and learn about Mars because it is a burning issue now. I learnt that cyclones are also present on Mars and about hot spots. I am excited that I worked on a project of worldwide interest with my teachers.

Tushar Aggarwal, XA
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar.

A tsunami of knowledge and exciting facts rushed through our minds while working on the topic "What Americans Eat" We came to know that there are not too much spices used in American food like in Indian food.

We love eating different foods so we chose the topic to work on. The exciting fact about American food is that they consume fast food more than anything else. We want to work more, to know more about the food of other countries, mostly like, Australia, China, Japan, etc.

Anurag, Manoj, Aditya & Arun, XC
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar.

Our topic was "Mississippi River". We chose this project because we wanted to know about the difference and similarity about our rivers and America's rivers. Rivers are an essential part of any civilization. We learnt from this that our Yamuna River is not so good compared with Mississippi river. From this (project) we want to know what America does to take care about Mississippi and from this we also want to learn what steps we should take.

Pragya Shree, Ruchi Pal, Neha Dhama, Gunjan, XC
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar.

Our project was Martin Luther King. We had read about Martin Luther king in our textbooks only. But this was a golden opportunity to learn more about this great leader's personality. We came to know about different aspects of this great leader. We learnt about that the place where he was buried is now a national monument and his assassination day in now a national holiday. We were most excited to hear a real recording of the famous King speech "I Have a Dream". We were greatly influenced by this speech.

We expect more opportunities to work on the culture of other countries as well as of India. We expect delegations from different countries to visit our school and give us more information on the glorious cultures of the world.

Neha Chaudhary, Ila Varshney, Manisha Sharma & Shipra Aggarwal, XC
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar.

We were a part of the team of CultureQuest and were involved in making projects to exchange cultural information between USA and India. During the course of our project we scanned literature depicting life of Americans and their inclination to be leaders in the world.

The project has taken us through various events in the life of Americans that depict their commitment and dedication for a real cause.

CultureQuest has taught us that understanding and respecting cultural differences can lead to greater harmony in school, the community and the world.

Mohit Chopra and Mrinalini Kapruwan
RPVV, Link Road

CultureQuest is a source of entertainment and also helps me increase my knowledge.

Sarinder Sahota, VI
RPVV, Shalimar Bagh

I have worked on the project 'AMERICAN WEDDINGS- Superstitions And Beliefs". I was enthralled to know that many superstitions also existed in such an advanced country like America. We could collect data from various friends out there.

This project has led to greater understanding between the two nations.

Parveen, Prashant,Garima, Vaibhav
RPVV, Paschim Vihar

We started working on the CultureQuest project while we were in class VIII. We learned to use computers, the Internet and make PowerPoint projects. We interacted on the Internet, searched for information and asked questions about America from friends made through the net. It was very interesting and exciting.

Students
R.P.V.V. HARI NAGAR

A WORD FROM THE TEACHERS

As teachers we have always treasured the moments when we see the spark ignite in a child's eyes. It is when faces light up and unbounded energy transforms a student that we realize that we have achieved something. We have realised that the true meaning of education is to help spark the desire to learn, to develop the unquenchable thirst for knowledge.

To us as teachers, CultureQuest has provided more than our fair share of achievements. Whatever else our efforts may have produced, students have rewarded us with their bright eyes, constant queries and numerous learning experiences. While participating in the interactions that our students have had with people in other countries, we have gained many insights as to how they approach issues, what they really think and feel about the things that matter (and those that don't). We see the success of CultureQuest in the manner in which our position has fast gone from initiators to facilitators. The future may and should perhaps see us as participants, judged by the quality of our interventions, rather than our status as teachers.

Bharat Chand Thakur, Snehlata Gupta, Girija Shankar
RPVV, Surajmal Vihar

CultureQuest has opened up new horizons for both students & teachers. It showed us how to make gainful use of ICT for building bridges of friendship and understanding. Distances vanished; and a vista of possibilities opened. It helped us to know the hidden potential in our students & facilitate them to spear ahead in present day competitive world. Students quest for exploration in the hitherto unknown domain of knowledge & their readiness to apply technology were amazing.

We all want CultureQuest India to continue & contribute its share in making this world a better place to live for everyone.

Rajyasri Narayan, Chandrakanta, Anju Mehta, Hemant Tahiliani
RPVV, Tyagraj Nagar, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

It is a wonderful experience for both teachers as well as for the students. The students are always keen to know about the different aspects of the United States of America. They used the Internet in order to know more about United States.Over-all, the project is good and must be carried on.

Mr. Sayyed Ahmed
RPVV, Shalimar Bagh

Initially I watched my daughter watching cartoons on TV. I did not even know their names, their special traits and characteristics. But while doing the study on different Walt Disney characters, I learnt much more than I had expected. I learnt their special names, developed a keen interest in them and now watch them even more than before. I inserted my voice and voices of my students to this project named Walt Disney, put in echo for better sound effects, used hyper linking, water marking and other multimedia applications.

Preeti Sharma
RPVV, Rohini

I consulted different sources - encyclopedia, Internet, National Geographic, just to learn more about the life giving river Mississippi. I learnt its various aspects, its source, its course and finally its merging. I put my voice, later heard it and then realized how voice was recorded in movies. It was a totally different experience.

Amita Taneja
RPVV, Rohini

The CAL training for CultureQuest opened up a new medium for me. I learned to develop PowerPoint presentations, animation and sound recording and have even used them to develop interesting presentations in my own subject as well. It has provided me with a new teaching aid.

Daisy Kalia
RPVV Lajpat Nagar

CultureQuest is a very interesting and innovative way of learning for both the teachers as well as the students. It inculcates in us the ability to meet all challenges in life and to meet the most important aim of education, i.e. the overall development of every one.

Ms. Rashmi Singh
RPVV, Shalimar Bagh

CultureQuest opens a new vista for students as well as teachers for communicating with their counterparts in various parts of the world through the internet technology while sitting in their classrooms. CQ reflects our very own Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam'. In this era of globalization, where the world has become a very small place, the medium of internet helps the people of one culture to directly interact with people from other cultures & appreciate the values & beliefs in other cultures. It brings us closer, makes us more open to different ideologies, customs & practices. While developing projects on various aspects of American Culture we got to know about the history of their music, their jazz bands, musicians & the influence on their music. We also learned about their cities, architecture & their flora & fauna.

Overall it was an enriching experience where we interacted with friends living in America to get first hand information about their country.

Chandraboli Ghorai, Kamayani Joshi
R.P.V.V. HARI NAGAR

CultureQuest has been a fascinating adventure. While working hand in hand with inquisitive students we came to know a lot about American culture. It made us believe that though the external appearances change but people are the same everywhere.

Ms. Nirupma Abhyankar
RPVV, Paschim Vihar

I learnt through CultureQuest that we can do a lot apart from teaching. I got involved with my students in this new learning. We came in touch with the students of other countries through emails, we learnt about their countries and culture, and satisfied our queries.

Renu Kashyap
RPVV Kishan Ganj

The students of the team of CultureQuest and participating teachers gained experience about the contribution of Americans in technological excellence. In the process of collecting information about manned mission in space, the students collected data from various websites, American Journals and American Centre in New Delhi. The compiled information was formatted on Power Point and was shared amongst the students of our school. The hosting of the project on the CultureQuest website of US left the students spell bound and their excitement saw no bounds.

Manishi Verma
R.P.V.V, Link Road, Karol Bagh

VIDEO CONFERENCING AS A PART OF CULTUREQUEST INDIA

One of the ways in which CultureQuest India is planning a healthy and meaningful exchange between students of different cultures, is to arrange for video conferencing. Students from government schools in Delhi will interact with students from schools in Moscow or New York or South Africa or other countries. The objective behind these video conferencing sessions is to give the students of Delhi and the students of other countries a first hand experience in interaction by seeing and hearing each other's experiences on a wide range of topics and thereby learn about different cultures.

Initially, two students in the 13-16 yr age group with basic English language skills were selected from each of the RPVV schools and they were asked to consider the questions that they would like to ask students from Moscow/New York, etc. With the help of the CultureQuest India teacher/teachers of the respective schools, the students became familiar with the topics and questions. For the students from all the RPVV's, all the meetings – prior to, during and after the conferencing sessions – have been very rewarding learning experiences; they have come to know each other and have become friends; they have started pruning their communication skills – to speak only the relevant things at the right time, articulating clearly what they would like to know of a different culture; they have come to know it is their project and hence they must not mind if in that process they will have to work in odd hours to meet their counterparts in countries with a different time-zone!

The technical aspect of the conferencing and the recording of the sessions were looked after by the SCERT and the Directorate of Education. The commitment of the whole team of teachers and officials was excellent and for the first time government school students saw and talked with their counterparts in another country. It was a thrilling experience for the students and an exhilarating experience for the teachers. Regular sessions are being planned and student participants, who are filled with excitement and enthusiasm, are looking forward to having frequent sessions in the future when they can learn more about other countries on different topics. Gradually, as CultureQuest India spreads to government schools other than the R.P.V.V's, the video conferencing sessions would include student and teacher representatives from those schools and reach out to more and more students all over Delhi, propagating good will, understanding, tolerance and peace.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS...

It is hoped that in today's age, dominated by information technology, CultureQuest India will provide a humane space for the youth to learn about the world and its people, and this endeavour in turn will lead to a more vibrant, tolerant and safer space for all of us to live in.

For CultureQuest to be truly effective, its base has to be broadened. To ensure that the tremendous benefits are not restricted to a select few :-

- All the teachers of RPVV will be trained in CultureQuest India.
- All the students from standard VI onward will be involved in this project.
- The programme will be initiated in other schools of the Directorate.
- Contacts shall be developed with other students and teachers within India such as the Northeast and the South to promote greater understanding and help children appreciate the diversity of culture in their own country.
- All the projects prepared by the teachers and students will be uploaded on the website so that anybody can access and benefit from these.
- It shall be extended to other countries such as Russia and China besides the USA. In particular, efforts shall be made to start CultureQuest with students and teachers in Pakistan.
- Direct links within the students groups through online chatting or video conferencing will be facilitated.
- Video conferecing facilities will be established in the SCERT.
- Web cameras shall be provided in schools so that students and teachers across the globe hear and see each other.

LAUNCH OF CULTURE QUEST
SUPPORT GROUP

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